

Remarks

Claims 4 and 17-38 were pending.

Claims 4, 17-23, 32, and 35-38 were allowed.

Claims 24-31, 33, and 34 were rejected.

Claims 39-49 have been added.

Claim 24 has been amended.

The Abstract has been amended.

The Specification has been amended.

The Rejection Of Claims 24-31, 33, and 34:

Claims 24-31, 33, and 34 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Ross et al. (US 5,413,180). Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection.

Ross et al. discloses a one trip backwash/sand control system with extensible washpipe isolation that includes a mounting collar 605 including flow bores 603 that receive shear screws 626 having hollow pockets 618, a shear sleeve 616 that receives opposite ends of the shear screws, a C-ring 614, and a drop ball A. During operation, the shear sleeve 616 is coupled to the mounting collar 605 by the shear screws 626. The shear sleeve 616 may be released from engagement with the mounting collar 605 by placing the drop ball A onto the top end of the C-ring 614 and then increasing the operating pressure within the mounting collar above the drop ball A thereby causing the shear screws to be fractured, opening the flow bores 603 thereby creating a pressure drop within the mounting collar 605, and releasing the shear sleeve from engagement with the mounting collar. Thus, Ross et al. does not disclose or suggest at least the following: 1) that the shear screws 626 are resilient during operation, 2) that the shear screws are non-frangible during operation, 3) that the shear screws are radially moveable during operation, 4) that the shear sleeve 616 is releasably coupled to the mounting collar 605 by an assembly that includes a body and one or more engagement elements pivotally coupled, and/or radially moveable with respect, to the mounting

body, 5) channels formed in the interior surface of the mounting collar and the exterior surface of the shear sleeve that receive engagement elements for releasably coupling the shear sleeve to the mounting collar, 6) that the shear sleeve and mounting collar may be released from engagement by moving the shear sleeve in a first direction, and then moving the shear sleeve in a second opposite direction, 7) that the shear screws are adapted to transmit torque and/or axial loads between the shear sleeve and the mounting collar, or 8) that the mounting collar is fluid tight following the release of the shear sleeve.

Claim 24, as amended, recites: An apparatus, comprising:

an outer tubular member comprising a plurality of slots at a plurality of discrete circumferentially spaced apart locations;

an inner tubular member positioned within the outer tubular member, the inner tubular member comprising a plurality of slots at a plurality of discrete circumferentially spaced apart locations; and

a resilient coupling assembly for releasably coupling the outer tubular member slots to the inner tubular member slots at a plurality of discrete circumferentially spaced apart locations.

By contrast, the shear screws 626 of Ross et al. are designed and intended to be frangible in operation in order to permit the shear sleeve 616 to be decoupled from the mounting collar 605. In fact, making the shear screws 626 of Ross et al. resilient would defeat the operation of Ross et al. Thus, Ross et al. does not disclose or suggest the invention of claim 24. Furthermore, for at least the same reasons, Ross et al. also does not disclose or suggest the invention of claims 25 and 26, that depend from claim 24.

Furthermore, claim 26, further recites "... a decoupling assembly for controllably decoupling the outer tubular member from the inner tubular member if the inner tubular member is displaced in a longitudinal direction relative to the outer tubular member and then displaced in an **opposite** longitudinal direction relative to the outer tubular member." By contrast, the only manner in which the shear sleeve 616 of Ross et al. may be disengaged from the mounting collar 605 is by displacing the shear sleeve

downwardly relative to the mounting collar. Thus, for at least this additional reason, Ross et al. does not disclose or suggest the invention of claim 26.

Claim 27 recites: An apparatus, comprising:

an outer tubular member comprising a plurality of slots at a plurality of discrete circumferentially spaced apart locations;

an inner tubular member positioned within the outer tubular member, the inner tubular member comprising a plurality of slots at a plurality of discrete circumferentially spaced apart locations; and

means for releasably coupling at least one outer tubular member slot to at least one inner tubular member slot.

Since claim 27 includes elements expressed in the form of “means plus function,” those elements must be construed in accordance with 35 U.S.C. § 112, ¶ 6. Thus, the “means for releasably coupling” must be construed to cover the corresponding structure, material, or acts described in the specification of the present application and equivalents thereof.

The specification of the present application discloses a “means for releasably coupling” that includes at least the collet upsets 1525 that mate with and are received within corresponding slots formed in the collet retaining adaptor 640 and the liner hanger setting sleeve 650 (see, e.g., Fig. 2M). The design of the collet upsets 1525 permits axial and torque loads to be transmitted between the collet retaining adaptor 640 and the liner hanger setting sleeve 650. During operation, the collet upsets 1525 may be moved inwardly in a radial direction out of engagement with the corresponding slots formed in the collet retaining adaptor 640 and the liner hanger setting sleeve 650 (see, e.g., Fig. 5A).

By contrast, the shear screws 626 of Ross et al. are designed and intended to be frangible in operation in order to permit the shear sleeve 616 to be decoupled from the mounting collar 605. There are not designed to permit axial and/or torque loads to be transmitted between the shear sleeve 616 and the mounting collar 605. In fact, making the shear screws 626 of Ross et al. resilient would defeat the operation of Ross et al. Furthermore, during the disengagement of the shear sleeve 616 of Ross et al. from the

mounting collar 605, the shear screws 626 are not displaced in a radial direction. Thus, Ross et al. does not disclose or suggest the invention of claim 27. Furthermore, for at least the same reasons, Ross et al. also does not disclose or suggest the invention of claims 28 and 29, that depend from claim 27.

Furthermore, claim 31, further recites “...means for decoupling the inner tubular member from the outer tubular member if the inner tubular member is displaced relative to the outer tubular member in a longitudinal direction and then displaced relative to the outer tubular member in an opposite longitudinal direction” By contrast, the only manner in which the shear sleeve 616 of Ross et al. may be disengaged from the mounting collar 605 is by displacing the shear sleeve downwardly relative to the mounting collar. Thus, for at least this additional reason, Ross et al. does not disclose or suggest the invention of claim 31.

Claim 33 recites: An apparatus, comprising:

an outer tubular member comprising a plurality of slots at a plurality of discrete circumferentially spaced apart locations;

an inner tubular member positioned within the outer tubular member, the inner tubular member comprising a plurality of slots at a plurality of discrete circumferentially spaced apart locations;

a coupling assembly for releasably coupling the outer tubular member to the inner tubular member at a plurality of the discrete circumferentially spaced apart slots;

a first decoupling assembly for controllably decoupling the outer tubular member from the inner tubular member if the operating pressure within the inner tubular member exceeds a predetermined value; and

a second decoupling assembly for controllably decoupling the outer tubular member from the inner tubular member if the inner tubular member is displaced in a longitudinal direction relative to the outer tubular member and then displaced in an opposite longitudinal direction relative to the outer tubular member.

By contrast, the only manner in which the shear sleeve 616 of Ross et al. may be disengaged from the mounting collar 605 is by displacing the shear sleeve downwardly

relative to the mounting collar. Thus, Ross et al. does not disclose or suggest the invention of claim 33.

Claim 34 recites: An apparatus, comprising:

an outer tubular member comprising a plurality of slots at a plurality of discrete circumferentially spaced apart locations;

an inner tubular member positioned within the outer tubular member, the inner tubular member comprising a plurality of slots at a plurality of discrete circumferentially spaced apart locations;

means for releasably coupling the outer tubular member to the inner tubular member at a plurality of the circumferentially spaced apart slots;

means for decoupling the inner tubular member from the outer tubular member if the operating pressure within the inner tubular member exceeds a predetermined value; and

means for decoupling the inner tubular member from the outer tubular member if the inner tubular member is displaced relative to the outer tubular member in a longitudinal direction and then displaced relative to the outer tubular member in an opposite longitudinal direction.

By contrast, the only manner in which the shear sleeve 616 of Ross et al. may be disengaged from the mounting collar 605 is by displacing the shear sleeve downwardly relative to the mounting collar. Thus, Ross et al. does not disclose or suggest the invention of claim 34.

Allowable Subject Matter:

The Applicants note with appreciation the indication of allowable subject matter for claims 4, 17-23, 32, and 35-38.

New claims 39-49:

Claims 39-49 present additional aspects of the present invention that are not disclosed or suggested by the prior art of record.

Unless stated otherwise, none of the amendments to the claims were made for reasons substantially related to the statutory requirements for patentability.

Furthermore, unless stated otherwise, the amendment to the claims were made to simply make express what had been implicit in the claims as originally worded and therefore is not a narrowing amendment that would create any type of prosecution history estoppel.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, it is respectfully submitted that the pending claims are drawn to novel subject matter, patentably distinguishable over the prior art of record. The Examiner is therefore respectfully requested to reconsider and allow the claims presented for reconsideration herein. To the extent that the present amendment results in additional fees, the Applicant authorizes the Commissioner to charge deposit account no. 08-1394.

Should the Examiner deem that any further amendment is desirable to place this application in condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the below listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,

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